

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 ACDA-07 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 CU-02 COME-00 EB-07

LAB-04 SIL-01 /110 W

----- 047261

R 041222Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0518

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS 0081

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SEDU, PINT, FR, FR

SUBJECT: MAY 1 DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRANCE

1. CGT AND CFDT HELD ONE OF THEIR LARGEST MAY 1 DEMONSTRATIONS IN PARIS IN RECENT YEARS, ESTIMATED AT 40,000 BY THE POLICE AND 200,000 BY THE ORGANIZERS. SMALLER MARCHES WERE ORGANIZED IN MOST OTHER MAJOR CITIES. SIMULTANEOUSLY MARKING THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE POPULAR FRONT AND MAYDAY, JOINED IN BY SECOND-LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PCF AND PS, THE PARIS PROCESSION WOUND ITS WAY FOR FOUR HOURS FROM THE BASTILLE TO THE OPERA. PERFECT WEATHER NO DOUBT HELPED MAKE FOR AN IMPRESSIVE TURN-OUT, AND LENT A FESTIVE AIR

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TO THE OTHERWISE SERIOUS TONE OF THE BANNERS AND SLOGANS

OF THE MARCHERS.

2. THOUGH BASICALLY COMPOSED OF CGT AND CFDT UNION MEMBERS, THE PROCESSION WAS ALSO JOINED BY A DISPARATE COLLECTION OF OTHER GROUPS, INCLUDING DISSIDENT SOLDIERS, SEPARATISTS AND FOREIGN DELEGATIONS. BY FAR THE LARGEST AND MOST COHESIVE OF THESE WERE 10,000 STRIKING STUDENTS, WHO WERE PROTESTING THE GOF'S UNIVERSITY REFORM BILL AND ATTEMPTING TO WIN WORKER SYMPATHY FOR THEIR CAUSE. ORDER WAS HANDLED WELL BY THE UNIONS' OWN PERSONNEL AND, DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF EXTREMISTS, THERE WERE VERY FEW INCIDENTS.

3. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS FORCE OUVRIERE ORGANIZED THIS YEAR A TRADITIONAL MARCH, WHICH BROUGHT TOGETHER SEVERAL THOUSAND PARTICIPANTS. FO HAD PURPOSELY ABSTAINED FROM THIS TRADITIONAL OBSERVANCE OUT OF A FEAR THAT THEIR NUMBERS WOULD COMPARE UNFAVORABLY WITH THOSE WHICH THE CGTCFDT AND FEN WOULD BE ABLE TO PUT ON THE STREETS ON SUCH OCCASIONS. THIS WAS ESPECIALLY THE CASE SINCE 1968, WHEN EXTREME LEFT-WING GROUPS (TROTSKYITES, MAOISTS, ETC.) HAVE JOINED CGT-CFDT AND FEN IN SUCH MARCHES. FO, HOWEVER, WAS GREATLY ENCOURAGED, AS REPORTED BY THE EMBASSY, BY THE RESPECTABLE SHOWING IT WAS ABLE TO PUT ON LAST SEPTEMBER IN HOLDING A "RENTREE" LABOR MEETING IN A LARGE DOWNTOWN HALL. BOLSTERED BY SUCH SUCCESS FO'S REGIONAL UNION FOR PARIS DECIDED TO TAKE THE RISK AND CALL FOR THIS MAY 1 PARADE.

4. A THIRD MARCH, ORGANIZED BY THE MARXIST-LENINIST DAILY "HUMANITE ROUGE", BROUGHT TOGETHER ABOUT 2,000 PEOPLE AND, AS THE OTHER TWO MARCHES, CONCLUDED WITH ONLY MINOR INCIDENTS. EMBOFF TRAPPED IN THIS DEMONSTRATION NOTED MASSIVE BUT GENERALLY RESTRAINED POLICE PRESENCE.

5. COMMENT: THE BATTLE CRIES FOCUSED MAINLY ON UNEMPLOYMENT, RISING COST-OF-LIVING, VARIOUS LIBERTIES, AND DID NOT SPARE ANY OF THE GOF LEADERS. BUT THE ORGANIZERS WERE CAREFUL TO RESTRICT THEIR SHOW OF DISCONTENT TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORDS AND TOOK EVERY MEASURE POSSIBLE TO AVOID ANY TEMPTATION TOWARD VIOLENCE. THEY ONCE AGAIN ARE SHOWING THEIR SENSITIVITY TO THE PREDICTABLE PUBLIC REACTION AGAINST LAWLESSNESS AND OTHER EXCESSES.
RUSH

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